AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows.

1-20.   (Canceled)

21.   (Currently Amended) A method for constructing a decision tracking object model for handling an issue related to a design of a product using a computer a system that ~~allows~~ enables collaboration between a plurality of users, the method performed in a computer system and comprising:

providing a question object, an answer object, a decision object, and a design issue object, wherein each of the question object, the answer object, the decision object, and the design issue object are capable of encapsulating at least one article of information and at least one relationship to another object;

~~storing~~ encapsulating a question related to the issue as an article of information in the question object~~, wherein the question is provided by a first user of the plurality of users~~;

~~storing~~ encapsulating an answer related to the question as an article of information in the answer object~~, wherein the answer is provided by a second user of the plurality of users; and~~

~~storing~~ encapsulating a decision made based on the answer as an article of information in the decision object~~; , wherein the decision is made by a third user of the plurality of users.~~

encapsulating the issue related to the design of the product as an article of information in the design issue object;

providing a decision tracking object model comprising the question object, the answer object, the decision object, and the design issue object;

storing the decision tracking object model in an object model database on a computer readable storage medium; and

providing at least one of the question object, the answer object, the decision object, and the design issue object to the plurality of users.

22.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21, wherein the plurality of users interacts with at least one of the question object, the answer object, and the decision object via a graphical user interface on a display device, the users interacting with the graphical user interface using an input device.

23.   (Canceled)

24.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21, wherein the storing of the question object, the answer object, and the decision object is in a tool-neutral persistent form.

25.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21, wherein each of the question object, the answer object, and the decision object are stored in a separate relational database, the method further comprising: using foreign keys to maintain associations between each of the question, the answer, and the decision.

26.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21, further comprising: storing at least one association between at least one of the issue object, the question object, the answer

object, and the decision object, and another of the issue object, the question object, the answer object, and the decision object.

27.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 26, wherein storing at least one association comprises: storing an association of the question object with the decision object along with the question object.

28.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 26, wherein storing at least one association comprises: storing an association of the answer object with the question object along with the answer object.

29.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 26, wherein storing at least one association comprises: storing an association of the decision object with the answer object along with the decision object.

30.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 26, wherein storing at least one association comprises: storing an association of the issue object with the question object.

31.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, wherein there are a plurality of questions related to the issue and a plurality of answers related to the plurality of questions.

32.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 31, further comprising: storing an association for each answer of the plurality of answers that indicates that each answer of the plurality of answers is associated with only one question of the plurality of questions.

33.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 32, further comprising: storing an association for each question of the plurality of questions that indicates that each question of the plurality of questions is associated with the issue.

34.   (Currently Amended) The method of the claim 31, further comprising: storing an association for each question of the plurality of questions that indicates that each question of the plurality of questions is associated with the decision.

35.   (New) The method of claim 21, wherein at least a part of the question object, the answer object, the design issue object, or the decision object is read or written by a Computer Aided Drafting tool.

36.   (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the decision relates to one of the group of a product requirement, a product function, a product design alternative, and a product representation.